

Pensacola News Journal  
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## **Try Pansies for Winter/Spring Color**

Flashes of color in the landscape helps to lift our spirits and keep the doldrums away during the short days of winter. Though there are several kinds of flowers that can provide cool season color, pansies are one of the best.

Visit your local garden center or retail nursery this month and you will find a good supply. They are generally sold as started plants in cell packs and are ready for transplanting to prepared beds.

Pansies are truly cool season flowers, so the sooner that they are planted, the longer they can be enjoyed. Hot weather beginning in May, usually causes a rapid decline and signals the need for their replacement with heat tolerant flowering species.

The growth habits of pansies make them ideal for small or large mass plantings. Space them about one foot apart so that many colorful blossoms create the most accents.

### **Pansy Growing Tips**

✍ A wide range of flower color choices is available including yellow, white, blue, pink, red, mahogany and even multicolored. Choose colors carefully. Mixed colors might work well if an informal look is your goal. A solid color that contrasts with the surrounding landscape is also very effective.

✍ Prepare the planting bed by thoroughly tilling or spading to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Incorporate an organic soil amendment such as peat, compost or manure, along with some fertilizer. A complete granular or slow release product can be used. Follow label directions and avoid applying excessive amounts.

✍ Space plants 10 to 14 inches apart and plant just deep enough that the top of the root ball is even with the soil surface.

✍ Mulch the entire bed to a depth of 2 to 3 inches, using a coarse material such as

pine needles or bark. Pull mulch a couple of inches away from the crown of plants.

✂ Water slowly and thoroughly to settle the soil and drive out any air pockets.

Regular watering will be required, especially during the first few weeks after planting.

Irrigate during the early morning hours in order to reduce the potential for leaf spotting and crown rot.

✂ Remove old flowers as soon as they begin to decline. This practice discourages seed production and keeps the flowering cycle going.

✂ To keep plants vigorous and flowering well, a couple of light, supplemental applications of fertilizer will be required on sandy planting sites. Fertilize at 6 to 8 week intervals, or after every period of heavy rains.

**Question of the Week:** I have a mushroom growing in my yard and would like to know what kind it is, and if it is edible. Can you help me?

**Answer:** This is not my area of expertise, but an excellent mushroom reference is now available. Common Florida Mushrooms, was written by Dr. James Kimbrough, University of Florida Extension mycologist for the past 35 years.

Dr. Kimbrough shares the science of mushroom hunting and identification, including those that are edible and those best left alone.

Vivid full-color photos assist identification in this color-tabbed reference. A section on cooking with mushrooms, complete with recipes, makes this field guide a necessary addition to any mushroom-lover's library.

This 342 page book can be ordered from the University of Florida. To order by credit card, call 1-800-226-1764. For other shipping and handling information call 352-392-1764, or shop the University's on-line catalog at IFASbooks.ufl.edu.